

UNBC-FA Newsletter & Negotiating Update

University of Northern BC Faculty Association

June/July 2010

FA Executive 2010-2011

President (effective 1 July 2010):	<i>Ken Prkachin</i>
Vice-President (as of 1 July 2010)	<i>vacant</i>
Past President:	<i>Darwyn Coxson</i>
Secretary:	<i>Julie Orlando</i>
Treasurer:	<i>Jalil Safaei</i>
Members-at -Large:	<i>Erik Jensen</i> <i>Jennifer Hyndman</i> <i>Karima Fredj</i> <i>Alex Lautensach</i> <i>Gail Curry</i> <i>Julie Orlando</i> <i>Kerry Reimer</i>
Grievance Officer:	

Bargaining Team 2010

Chief Negotiator	<i>Darwyn Coxson</i>
Member	<i>David Casperson</i>
Member	<i>Scott Emmons</i>
Member	<i>Suzanne Leblanc</i>

(Outgoing) President's Message: J. Holler

June has come and gone--and with it the end of my term as FA President. Effective 1 July 2010, I step down to go on (a delayed) one-year sabbatical, leaving the presidency in Ken Prkachin's able hands. Ken has my deepest appreciation for a year of excellent service as VP, and I know the association will benefit from his wisdom and experience during his presidency. I would also like to offer sincere thanks to Executive Director Suzanne LeBlanc, the FA executive, and our negotiating team for a fine year. The association has been busy, and has had significant success in defending our members. All of you have worked diligently to make this happen. Thanks too to those who planned and attended our meet-and-greet on Monday 28 June. It was a lovely event, and it reminded me again of the value of our Faculty Lounge.

When the FA President steps down, according to our constitution, the Vice-President accedes to the presidency. Of course, that process creates a vacancy at the vice-presidential level. Please consider nominating a colleague—or yourself—for this position (see over). The role of the Vice-President is *always* important, but this time it is particularly critical. We are, of course, still negotiating our new collective agreement (for more on that, see the report below). Even more importantly, the new VP will himself or herself take over as President in January when Ken goes on sabbatical.

This issue of the newsletter is in part occasioned by the transition in the executive. But this is also a negotiations update—a chance to let you know what's been happening at the table and what's still to come. As you know, bargaining began in March. Unfortunately, few meetings were possible until quite recently. Nonetheless, progress has been made in some areas. Still, as detailed below, bargaining remains in progress as our contract expires.

What does this mean for members? Happily, little. Expected CDI and PDA payments will be made on 1 July, and the provisions of the contract remain in force. However, a significant disagreement has emerged between the FA and the administration.

The University argues that there is no funding for the 2009/2010 CSAM merit award process in the current Faculty Agreement (see Article 25.2.1) and that funds for this purpose will have to be identified in the new FA contract. The Association and University have different opinions on this interpretation of Article 25.2.1 and are holding further discussions in an attempt to resolve this issue.

(Incoming) President's Message: K. Prkachin

As you know, having read her column, Jacqueline Holler is stepping down from the Presidency to take up a well-earned sabbatical. I will be stepping in to take her place until my own sabbatical begins in January, 2011. I want to express my thanks to Jacqueline for her service as President in the past year, and the years she has spent on the Executive of the Association. Jacqueline and I have worked closely in the last year. I have been truly amazed at her diligence, dedication to members and leadership of the organization. It seems that, whenever an issue relating to members has come up, she has been there, keenly aware of the issues and advocating forcefully for members. She's a hard act to follow and I hope to sustain her accomplishments.

Of course, the biggest issue facing members in the near term is the new contract. Our team has been immersed in preparation for bargaining and proactive in seeking input from members. I have had the opportunity to attend some of the bargaining preparation and negotiation sessions. I believe that members can be comforted that we have a thoroughly competent and energetic team working on our behalf and I look forward to the conclusion of an agreement that facilitates good working conditions while correcting shortcomings of previous agreements.

For my own part, one of the things I would like to accomplish in my time as President is to find ways to enable members to do the work they were hired to do and that they are passionate about. In my 17 years at UNBC, I have been struck by the many opportunity costs in our working lives—in particular, the policies that get in the way of scholarship. I would encourage members to bring examples of such opportunity costs to my attention and pledge to work toward addressing them to the extent that is possible within the mandate of the Association.

JOINT TENURE AND PROMOTION WORKSHOP

for all continuing members

**Come and hear presentations from FA
and Administration representatives**

Bring your questions!

**7 July 2010
1200--130 pm**

**7-172 (Bentley Centre)
Lunch will be served**

Officer Vacancy on the FA Executive

The Faculty Association seeks candidates for the vacant vice-presidential position. The elected member will serve until June 30, 2011, and will by constitutional provision (5.1) become President for the balance of the term effective 1 January 2011. In addition to serving as a signing officer and member of the executive, the Vice-President carries out the duties of the President during his/her absence.

This position is open to all active members of the association. Candidates must be nominated by two members in good standing. Please forward nominations, along with a brief candidate biographical statement, to the Faculty Association office (admin room 3085) or via email at fac-assoc@unbc.ca.

Deadline for nominations is: Friday 10 September 2010 at 4:30 pm. A paper ballot will be distributed thereafter, with the expectation that the incumbent will take up duties effective 1 October 2010. .

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact any member of the executive or the Faculty Association office (fac-assoc@unbc.ca or ext 5816).

Negotiation; Update

By Darwyn Coxson

The Faculty Association bargaining team has just concluded our first full week of meetings with the University bargaining team, following several earlier one-day meetings. We are still at early stages, but have had good discussions around several major issues that were raised in our consultation sessions with Faculty members. Unfortunately, the University was delayed in obtaining approval of their bargaining mandate from the provincial government (PSEC), which has set back our overall bargaining schedule. We have scheduled further bargaining sessions in July and hope to have an approved agreement available for ratification in September. Please note that the provisions of the current Faculty Agreement remain in force after June 30, 2010. Any changes in salary and/or rank (e.g. from CDI or promotion) that you would otherwise have been entitled to on July 1, 2010, will continue as normal. As noted in the President's comments above, the disposition of the 2009/2010 merit awards has not been determined.

Our discussions with the University started on librarian and SLI issues, where the University has brought forward proposals to achieve greater similarity between committee structures used to evaluate Members' career progress. In some areas, especially for librarians, this is a direction consistent with Member discussions with the Association. In other areas, it has resulted in detailed discussions about the nature of career progress at UNBC. The Association and University are still in discussion about how we define the role of professional librarians at UNBC.

In the past week we have entered into detailed discussions regarding the merit system at UNBC. This included discussions about the difficulties CEC committees have had in determining which faculty meet the criteria for merit awards, especially when the pool of meritorious faculty seems larger than the current number of awards. The CSAM award process during 2010 was particularly difficult, with the committee passing a resolution at the end of their deliberations calling upon the parties to change the system. Three alternatives have been discussed.

- 1) We can return to a more broadly based merit system, where a majority of faculty receive awards, perhaps of differing amounts based on performance. Unfortunately, a return to a broad-based merit system, which we essentially had before 2006, would be difficult to implement in the current bargaining environment, where the funds supporting the

awarding of more merit awards would essentially have to be reallocated from other salary sources. We have not dismissed this alternative, but progress in this direction seems unlikely.

- 2) A second alternative, which many members have advocated, is the elimination of merit pay at UNBC. There seems to be little evidence that merit pay systems change the performance or motivation of faculty at Canadian universities. This option would probably be the first choice of the Association.
- 3) A third alternative, which is currently under discussion, is to eliminate the current merit pay awards, but to expand upon the system of achievement awards that have been already implemented at UNBC, such as the teaching achievement award. We are now in discussion about creating awards for teaching, scholarship, service, and professional practice, awards that would be open by nomination to any member of the Association, in a more transparent and open award process.

Many other issues remain to be discussed at the bargaining table. Bargaining on compensation related issues, limited though they may be, will probably occur near the end of the negotiation process. The University has put forward some proposals to save money by reducing eligibility for benefit and leave provisions; however, the Association has argued that the cost savings are small, whereas the damage to our ability to retain and attract qualified personnel at UNBC would be much larger.

The current bargaining round has also been used to review the entire Faculty Agreement and suggest improvement to its structure and flow. Incremental changes over time have resulted in many topics being split between different parts of the agreement. Revisions have been time-consuming, but will result in an agreement that is easier to use and understand.

If you are aware of ongoing issues regarding the implementation of the Faculty Agreement please bring them to the attention of the Association Executive or members of the bargaining team. For additional information please follow the below web link for Association bargaining positions:

http://www.unbcfa.ca/FacultyNegotiation2010/themes_for_negotiations_js.html

UNBC's Faculty Lounge

Established through the efforts of UNBC-FA members in 2008, the Faculty Lounge is open to all members. Located at the top of the cafeteria overlooking the Admin Building courtyard, the lounge offers comfortable seating and a quiet environment.

Recently, the lounge has also hosted successful special events such as retirement and FA gatherings. Thanks to Art Fredeen, Ken Otter, Zoe Meletis and others for advocacy and labours in establishing and maintaining the lounge.

If you have questions about access, using or booking the Faculty Lounge, or suggestions for member events, please contact Art (fredeena@unbc.ca).

FA OFFICE

The FA office is in Rm.3085 Admin Bldg.

Contact Suzanne at local 5816 or via e-mail at: fac-assoc@unbc.ca if you wish to arrange a meeting.